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FROM: Kika de la Garza

Washington D C

BUDGET PROPOSALS coming from the White House have received the news headlines, but actually the federal government is today operating under a spending and revenue plan devised by Congress.

Appropriations and taxing power in fact has been reserved to Congress since the beginning of the Republic. But until now, Congress has been under a severe disadvantage when trying to understand the overall impact of its spending and taxing decisions. The White House alone had the machinery to propose programs, monitor spending and decide how much of the nation's resources it wanted to devote to federal programs.

Congress has not been equipped to measure one program against another in terms of some sort of overall goals for a ceiling on spending and a floor on revenue. Now it is so equipped as a result of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

The new procedures have been in use for two years. During this time Congress has proved that it can meet the tight deadlines ordered by the 1974 legislation, can fix detailed and overall targets for next year's revenues and spending, can stay within those targets or adjust them as required by the nation's needs, can establish an explicit fiscal policy goal, and can shape its decisions in accordance with the fiscal policy it has decided on.

By May 15, Congress must come up with a working budget. By September 15, two weeks before the start of the new fiscal year, it must pass a concurrent resolution which sets binding spending ceilings and revenue floors. The House and Senate Budget Committees act in consultation with the various appropriations committees.

Most spending programs have a way of looking good when they are considered by themselves. But when they are added up, the total may far exceed the overall level of federal spending desired by Congress. Under the new budget procedure, Congress not only sets overall spending levels for itself but in addition, the two Budget Committees provide a continuous flow of information on what passage of a particular bill will do to other established priorities.

Such knowledge is absolutely essential if we are to advance toward a balanced federal budget. And I'm for that!

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SUGAR PRICES have fluctuated wildly in recent months, a matter of direct concern to our area. A report is due shortly from the U S International Trade Commission on the domestic impact of sugar imports. This report is scheduled for study by a special inter-agency group headed by the Secretary of Agriculture, set up to make recommendations to the President's Economic Policy Group.

A rise in consumer prices is necessary to help the ailing sugar industry. I've noticed that nearly every news story coming out of Washington on this subject makes the point that each penny a pound increase is estimated to cost Americans \$225 million a year. No less emphasis, it seems to me, should be placed on the fact that the current price of sugar is about four cents a pound less than the average cost of production. We need policies that will return stability to sugar prices, and we are working towards that end.

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BUSINESS PROBLEMS caused by energy shortages and weather disasters are now focused on by 63 U S Department of Field Offices around the country recently designated as Centers for Business Emergencies. The help offered by the Centers can be of two kinds, Secretary of Commerce Juanita M Kreps has informed me: "On the one hand, we can pinpoint sources of assistance within the federal government. On the other hand, we can see that constructive suggestions and potentially useful solutions coming from the business community are placed directly and immediately with the government official who can deal with them."

Centers serving South Texas are located at San Antonio in the University of Texas Division of Continuing Education and at Houston in the Federal Building.

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TEXAS SPORTSMEN and all nature lovers will benefit from federal aid funds apportioned to the State this year for sport fish and wildlife restoration and hunter safety programs.

Texas will get more-- \$4,010,000 -- for wildlife restoration and hunter safety than any other State. For fish restoration, Texas is apportioned \$1,242,500, more than for any other State except Alaska and California; they will receive identical amounts.

Special taxes on hunters and fishermen raise these funds. Wildlife restoration funds may be used on approved State projects such as the acquisition of land suitable for habitat, development and management of habitat, and research in managing game species. Fish restoration funds are used for buying land and water areas, construction and rehabilitation of lakes, development of access sites and facilities for fishermen, and research to aid in management of sport fisheries. We must assist nature retain a balance to compensate for man's contribution to imbalance.

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VISITOR FROM HOME: Visiting my office from home this week was Mr William M Nix of McAllen.

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